

Water and sewer utility regulation
(SB 884 by Traeger)

DIGEST:

The bill would have transferred regulatory jurisdiction over water and sewer utilities from the Public Utility Commission to the Texas Water Commission. The bill, entitled the "Water and Sewer Utility Regulatory Act," consisted primarily of language from the Public Utility Regulatory Act, under which the PUC now regulates water and sewer utilities. The bill also includes some, but not all, of the changes made in the PURA by SB 232, the PUC sunset bill.

GOVERNOR'S
REASONS
FOR VETO:

"Because of recent reforms of the Public Utility Commission, the interests of the consumers of this state are best served by the continued regulation of water and sewer utilities by this entity."

SPONSOR'S
VIEW:

Sen. Traeger said it was "absolutely ridiculous" for the Governor to veto the bill. It was a logical bill, since all the other water-related programs are under the authority of the Department of Water Resources. The PUC has a very limited staff that is not knowledgeable about water-related matters. "They're a bunch of young attorneys who don't know anything about water rights," the senator said.

The vote on the bill was overwhelming in both Houses. "It was only after that woman public utility commissioner (Peggy Rossen) wrote to everyone opposing the bill" that the Governor vetoed it. "The only real opposition seems to have come from her and some water companies (Rep.) Gene Green represents in Houston." Sen. Traeger said he is "very upset" about the veto of the bill and "will run with it again and get it passed."

NOTES:

The HSG analysis of SB 884 appeared in the May 26 Daily Floor Report. For further information on the PUC see House Study Group Special Report Number 80, "The Public Utility Commission," March 22, 1982, and the analysis of the PUC sunset bill, SB 232, by Caperton et al., in the May 16 Daily Floor Report.